

**CHAPTER 8 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: PRESERVATION AND  
HISTORIC FEATURES ELEMENT**

Secs.	
800	Declaration of Major Policies
801	Goals and Objectives
802	Criteria for Designating Historic Landmarks and Historic Districts
803	Policies for Identifying and Recognizing Historic Properties
804	General Policies for Protection and Enhancement of Historic Properties
805	Specific Policies for Protection and Enhancement of Historic Properties
806	Criteria for Designating Special Streets and Places
807	Policies for Special Streets and Places
808	Public Action
899	Definitions

**800 DECLARATION OF MAJOR POLICIES**

- 800.1 The unique importance of the physical appearance of the National Capital and the significance of its history to the entire nation have long been recognized.
- 800.2 The important historic features of the District are due to the historic design framework achieved through the continuity of earlier planning efforts, notably the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, and of individual landmarks and districts.

**801 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- 801.1 The new preservation and historic features goal for the District is to preserve the important historic features of the District while permitting new development that is compatible with those features.
- 801.2 The objective for historic properties is to increase awareness of, and access to, facilities, places, and activities essential to residents and visitors.

**802 CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING HISTORIC LANDMARKS AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

- 802.1 Historic and prehistoric buildings, building interiors, structures, monuments, works of art or other similar objects, areas, places, sites, neighborhoods, networks, and historic landscapes should be designated as historic landmarks or historic districts if they meet the following criteria:
- (a) They possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent, or contain the values and qualities for which they are judged significant;

- (b) Sufficient time has passed since they achieved significance or were constructed to permit professional evaluation of them in their historical context; and
- (c) They possess one (1) or more of the following values or qualities:
  - (1) They are sites of significant events or are associated with persons, groups, institutions, or movements that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture, or development of the National Capital or the nation;
  - (2) They exemplify the significant or unique military, social, political, economic, scientific, technical, educational, historical, engineering, archeological, architectural, or artistic heritage of the National Capital or the nation;
  - (3) They embody the distinguishing characteristics of architectural styles; building types; types or methods of construction; landscape architecture; urban design; or other architectural, aesthetic, or engineering designs or expressions significant to the appearance and development of the National Capital or the nation;
  - (4) They have been identified as notable works of craftsmen, artists, sculptors, architects, landscape architects, urban planners, engineers, builders, or developers who have influenced the evolution of their fields of endeavor, or the development of the National Capital or the nation;
  - (5) They contain information about or evidence of historic or prehistoric events, processes, institutions, design, construction, settlement patterns, or other facets of earlier cultures known or established to be important to knowledge or understanding of those cultures; or
  - (6) They represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

802.2 Historic and prehistoric buildings, building interiors, structures, monuments, works of art or other similar objects, areas, places, sites, neighborhoods, networks, and historic landscapes listed in the Inventory of Historic Sites maintained by the Historic Preservation Review Board on the date of adoption of this chapter are historic landmarks or historic districts, unless it is subsequently determined that they do not meet the criteria set forth in §802.1.

802.3 Historic and prehistoric buildings, building interiors, structures, monuments, works of art or other similar objects, areas, places, sites, neighborhoods, networks, and historic landscapes that meet the criteria set forth in §802.1 shall also be considered to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places unless it is subsequently

determined by the Secretary of Interior that they do not meet those National Register criteria.

**803        POLICIES   FOR   IDENTIFYING   AND   RECOGNIZING   HISTORIC  
PROPERTIES**

- 803.1       Properties meriting designation as historic landmarks and historic districts or listing in the National Register of Historic Places should be identified through comprehensive surveys that cover every aspect of the prehistory and history of the National Capital.
- 803.2       Priorities for surveys should be established that reflect the transcendent importance of some resources such as the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, the endangered status of others, the fundamental responsibility of government to recognize and protect its own historic properties, and the need to encourage private preservation efforts.
- 803.3       Once an area, property, or group of properties has been comprehensively surveyed and the survey has been certified as comprehensive by the State Historic Preservation Officer, after having evaluated the survey to identify potential landmarks or historic districts, a moratorium should be placed on the filing of further applications for designation within the survey area that are inconsistent with the findings of the State Historic Preservation Officer. This moratorium shall not apply to an application by the owner of a property.
- 803.4       Completed surveys should be reevaluated periodically because properties that did not appear significant at the time of the original survey may, over time, be perceived to merit designation.
- 803.5       Owners, appropriate private organizations, and community and neighborhood associations are encouraged to participate in the survey process under the direction of the appropriate governmental agency.
- 803.6       All of those properties that appear to meet the criteria established by the Secretary of the Interior should be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places or should be requested to be determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places.
- 803.7       Each historic property now carried in the Inventory of Historic Sites maintained by the Historic Preservation Review Board is believed to meet the designation criteria for historic landmarks and historic districts and is so designated unless it is subsequently determined that it does not meet the criteria in the same manner as provided for by formal designation.
- 803.8       Similarly, each historic property that meets the designation criteria for historic landmarks and historic districts is considered to meet the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places unless the Secretary of the Interior subsequently determines that it does not meet those criteria. This finding is based on the observation that the designation criteria are generally consistent with those applied by the National Register of Historic Places.

**804            GENERAL POLICIES FOR PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

804.1        The federal and District governments should cooperatively do each of the following:

- (a)    Provide leadership in the protection and enhancement of the important historic resources of the National Capital;
- (b)    Establish and sustain exemplary standards of property stewardship, design, and maintenance of all historic property under their ownership or control;
- (c)    Use, to the maximum extent feasible, historic properties available to them when acquiring, constructing, or leasing space for carrying out government responsibilities;
- (d)    Undertake whatever measures are necessary before disposing of historic properties to ensure their continued preservation;
- (e)    Increase their efforts to protect significant archeological resources;
- (f)    Provide sufficient administrative flexibility in building codes and other related codes and regulations to permit maximum preservation and protection of historic resources while still ensuring the health and safety of the public;
- (g)    Ensure that records relating to the construction, alteration, and demolition of historic properties or potential historic properties are retained for future use and reference;
- (h)    Ensure that actions that affect historic properties are reviewed for historic preservation impacts;
- (i)    Coordinate their plans and programs that affect historic resources of the National Capital;
- (j)    Develop standards and guidelines for the treatment and alteration of historic properties, as well as for the design of new buildings in the vicinity of those properties;
- (k)    Continue to protect the historic horizontal character of the National Capital by limiting building heights in accordance with An Act To regulate the height of buildings in the District of Columbia, approved June 1, 1910 (36 Stat. 452; D.C. Code § 5-401 *et seq.*).

- (l) Adopt development controls and design review criteria that, for particular historic districts, reflect the existing valuable characteristics of all or part of the particular historic district;
- (m) Encourage direct private sector participation and initiatives in historic preservation by promoting existing preservation tools, eliminating existing incentives to replace resources, and developing new and effective preservation programs;
- (n) Foster broad community participation in the effort to protect and enhance historic properties in the National Capital and give maximum encouragement to organizations and individuals undertaking preservation by private means, particularly the financially disadvantaged;
- (o) Promote public education in the value of, and process for, preserving historic resources; and
- (p) Coordinate with affected local jurisdictions regarding historic resources at or near the boundaries of the District or that border on historic resources on federal lands in the region to ensure that mutual concerns are recognized and protection objectives are accomplished.

**805        SPECIFIC POLICIES FOR PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES**

- 805.1        Every effort should be made to provide for the continued, appropriate use of all historic properties. If the original use or a reasonable intensification of the original use is no longer feasible, appropriate adaptive uses consistent with applicable land use regulations should be encouraged.
- 805.2        The distinguishing qualities or character of historic landscapes should be protected and enhanced.
- 805.3        Every effort should be made to minimize the adverse visual, physical, and noise impacts of motorized vehicles on historic property.
- 805.4        Within historic districts and particularly within the L'Enfant City, original street patterns should be preserved by maintaining public rights-of-way. Where alleys continue to provide adequate off-street service and transportation functions, they should be retained.
- 805.5        The squares, circles, and reservations, both large and small, in street space throughout the L'Enfant City should be retained and nurtured generally as green landscaped areas, providing oases for pedestrians, podia for statuary, and viewing platforms for the major vistas down L'Enfant streets and avenues.

## ENROLLED ORIGINAL

- 805.6 The landscaped green space on publicly owned, privately maintained front and side yards in historic districts and on historic landmarks should be preserved. Special care should be taken to protect these historic green areas from being paved over for vehicular access and parking.
- 805.7 Publicly owned historic landscaped and historic open spaces, such as monument grounds, public building grounds, gardens, battlefields, forts, cemeteries, reservations, parks, and park systems, should be protected from unrelated and unnecessary construction that would adversely affect their integrity.
- 805.8 Open space traditionally associated with privately owned historic properties, such as yards, gardens, and large estate grounds, should be retained whenever possible. If additional development is permitted, sufficient open space should be retained to protect the essential integrity of the particular historic property and its sense of setting.
- 805.9 In historic districts the established form of development, as evidenced by lot-coverage limitations, yard requirements and other standards that contribute to the open space character and attractiveness of those districts, should be protected.
- 805.10 Applications for the demolition of buildings or structures that do not contribute to historic properties should be routinely approved.
- 805.11 Demolition of buildings or structures that contribute to historic properties should be permitted only when denial of permission would result in unreasonable economic hardship to the owner, or when demolition is necessary to permit the construction of a project of special merit. In instances where a project has been determined to be of special merit, if it is demonstrated that the replacement project will be initiated immediately and can be completed, demolition will be permitted to proceed.
- 805.12 The integrity of historic properties should be protected from demolition by neglect, purpose, or design through the use of appropriate enforcement tools.
- 805.13 When possible, deteriorated historic landmarks or buildings that contribute to historic districts should be repaired rather than demolished.
- 805.14 Historic buildings, whose significance is embodied in their sites and settings as well as in the buildings themselves, should be moved only when there is no feasible alternative for preservation. If an historic building must be moved, its new setting should complement its historic orientation, and previous sense of place and integrity. If the relocated building is established on a new site that itself possesses historic significance, its presence should not adversely affect the significance of the new location.
- 805.15 The distinguishing original quality or character of historic properties should be protected. The removal or alteration of any historically valuable material or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible and kept to a minimum when required for

continued use. The design of additions should be compatible with the height, scale, materials, color, texture, and character of the historic property.

- 805.16 New construction on historic landmarks or in historic districts should be compatible with the historical architectural character and cultural heritage of the landmark or district. In design, height, proportion, mass, configuration, building materials, texture, color, and location, new construction should complement these valuable features of the landmark or district, particularly features in the immediate vicinity to which the new construction will be visually related.
- 805.17 Archeological resources should be retained intact, where feasible. If preservation in place is not feasible or data anticipated to be recovered is judged to be of such significance that excavation is justified, the area of destruction, alteration or disturbance of a recognized archeological resource should be minimized and findings should be documented.
- 805.18 Each historic district shall have a zoning overlay if necessary to protect and enhance its distinctive characteristics of housing type, density, height, and uses. Such overlays shall be developed between the Office of Planning and the D.C. Historic Preservation Office.
- 805.19 Reduce the development pressure on churches, synagogues, and other places of worship which are designated as historic landmarks or are contributing buildings located in historic districts, by consideration of allowing them to transfer unused density (transferable development rights or "TDRs") to properties in the receiving zones designated as part of the Downtown Development District and to use the proceeds of the sale of the TDRs to help maintain the church or other place of worship in accordance with renovation and restoration plans approved by the Historic Preservation Review Board. Any funds remaining could be used to support the programs run by the church or other place of worship.

**806 CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATING SPECIAL STREETS AND PLACES**

- 806.1 Avenues, streets, parkways, park roads, pedestrian ways, and other routes should be designated as special streets; and public squares circles, plazas, grounds, gardens, and other urban spaces should be designated as special places if they possess one (1) or more of the following values or qualities:
- (a) They are historically significant as important components of the L'Enfant Plan, the McMillan Plan, an historic district or an historic landmark; or as scenes of important past public events or notable accomplishments in architecture and urban design;
  - (b) They contribute to the design framework of the National Capital by defining the basic spatial organization of the District, such as an axial or diagonal avenue; or by providing special settings that emphasize or define major scenic or symbolic areas,

such as outlooks, memorials, monumental buildings, or other civic art; or by serving as important connections, edges, or boundaries;

- (c) They embody or display a distinctive functional importance by providing amenities or settings that either serve as a focus for neighborhood and community activities or enhance opportunities for recreation and occasions for civic pageantry; or promoting a special sense of entrance to the National Capital; or serving as routes or areas for ceremonial cultural or governmental activities of the District or the nation; or
- (d) They have image qualities that establish unique or memorable impressions by focusing on a distinctive activity, unified streetscape, outstanding work of civic art, unique natural feature, or conspicuous historic landmark; or contribute to a complex of interconnected landscapes, architectural settings, or activity centers that display a distinctive coherence.

806.2 Master plans for federal properties in the National Capital Region outside of the District should identify areas as special streets or special places consistent with the criteria of §806.1.

806.3 Except as provided in §806.4, the network of special streets and places designated pursuant to §806.1 is depicted on the “Comprehensive Plan Special Streets and Places Map,” which is attached to this element.

806.4 The network of special streets and places is amended by adding Georgia Avenue, N.W., between Harvard Street, N.W., and Eastern Avenue, N.W.

## **807 POLICIES FOR SPECIAL STREETS AND PLACES**

807.1 Special streets and places should be maintained and enhanced in a manner that promotes their role as major features that help establish the images and the symbols of the National Capital in the minds of its residents and visitors. They should be embellished, when possible, with monuments, fountains, sculpture, gardens, distinctive buildings, and other features of civic art. These embellishments should be placed strategically to serve as frequent points of orientation and visual delight. To the extent practicable, public activities and buildings should be located and focused on the special streets and places.

807.2 The existing street space and the buildings fronting on special streets and places should be maintained, protected, and enhanced. Any repair, maintenance, improvement, or new building should respect the historic elements, enhance the aesthetic quality, and promote the amenity of this space.

807.3 Existing special places should be protected, enhanced, and strengthened. New special places should be created as new activity centers are developed or neighborhoods revitalized. Historic plans and their underlying principles should be used for guidance in



planning major improvements. Civic art should be used to enrich such places and to establish their identity and image.

- 807.4 The exceptional width and openness of the street space along special streets should be retained where this quality exists. Street views or vistas should not be obscured and movement should not be impaired by structures or signs within the public rights-of-way.
- 807.5 The integrity of the form and design of streets and places, particularly those of historic significance, should be maintained and protected to the extent feasible and as warranted by safety requirements from unnecessary traffic channelization and from encroachment of new buildings into public space. The intersections of special streets should be carefully designed to reflect the importance of the junctures and to respect the historic plans.
- 807.6 The visual quality of special streets and places should be carefully controlled and coordinated by the selection and placement of signs, traffic signals, lighting, bus stops, and other elements of street furniture, as well as pavement patterns and materials that together should promote a harmonious, orderly, and safe streetscape. Parking areas, driveways, or service areas should be carefully controlled, located, and designed to avoid adverse impact.
- 807.7 Pedestrian usage of special streets and places should be encouraged by emphasizing extra width and other special amenities of sidewalks, where feasible. Areas should be provided for various types of leisure time activities as appropriate. Ground floor uses in buildings, attractive entrances, and outdoor activities that would enliven the street scene should be encouraged.
- 807.8 Landscape treatment of special streets and places should supplement and reinforce the “green city” or “city-in-a-park” character fostered by the National Capital’s natural features, parks, public buildings, monuments, and memorials. High priority should be given to continuing maintenance and supplementing existing street trees, and providing trees and plantings as appropriate in special places.
- 807.9 The streetscape and treatment of buildings fronting on special streets should serve to connect visually special places with one another when possible, by creating lines of sight and continuity with street trees and plantings, by use of special paving materials, and by careful consideration of building height and massing.
- 807.10 Architecturally prominent buildings should be located in special streets and places to accentuate vistas, provide focal points, and mark entrances. The general height, roof lines, and massing of buildings should serve as a unified background for the public space in these special streets and places.

**808 PUBLIC ACTION**

## **ENROLLED ORIGINAL**

- 808.1 The public action objective is to ensure the designation, protection, and enhancement of District historic resources by providing sustained regulatory, enforcement, and financial leadership.
- 808.2 The Historic Preservation Review Board should amend its procedures for the designation of historic landmarks and historic districts to conform to the criteria set forth in §802.
- 808.3 The criteria set forth in §802 provide guidance for designating historic landmarks and historic districts.
- 808.4 The District and federal governments should provide guidance and leadership in undertaking a systematic and thorough District-wide historic resources survey program.
- 808.5 The District and federal governments should increase assistance to persons seeking to take advantage of the tax incentives provided by the federal government. Processing of applications for listing in the National Register of Historic Places should be accelerated. Technical assistance should be provided to owners who desire to rehabilitate historic properties pursuant to provisions of Tax Reform Act of 1986, approved October 22, 1986 (P.L. 99-514).
- 808.6 A map that depicts the location of historic districts and landmarks in the District shall be published by June 30, 1990, updated not less frequently than once every five (5) years, and be available for review in each public library of the District and for sale by the Office of Documents and Administrative Issuances.
- 808.7 In the preparation of master plans and project plans for public facilities and improvements, federal and District agencies should ensure that these plans are consistent with the goals and policies in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital.

## **899 DEFINITIONS**

- 899.1 The provisions of §199 of chapter 1 of this title and the definitions set forth in that section shall be incorporated by reference in this section.